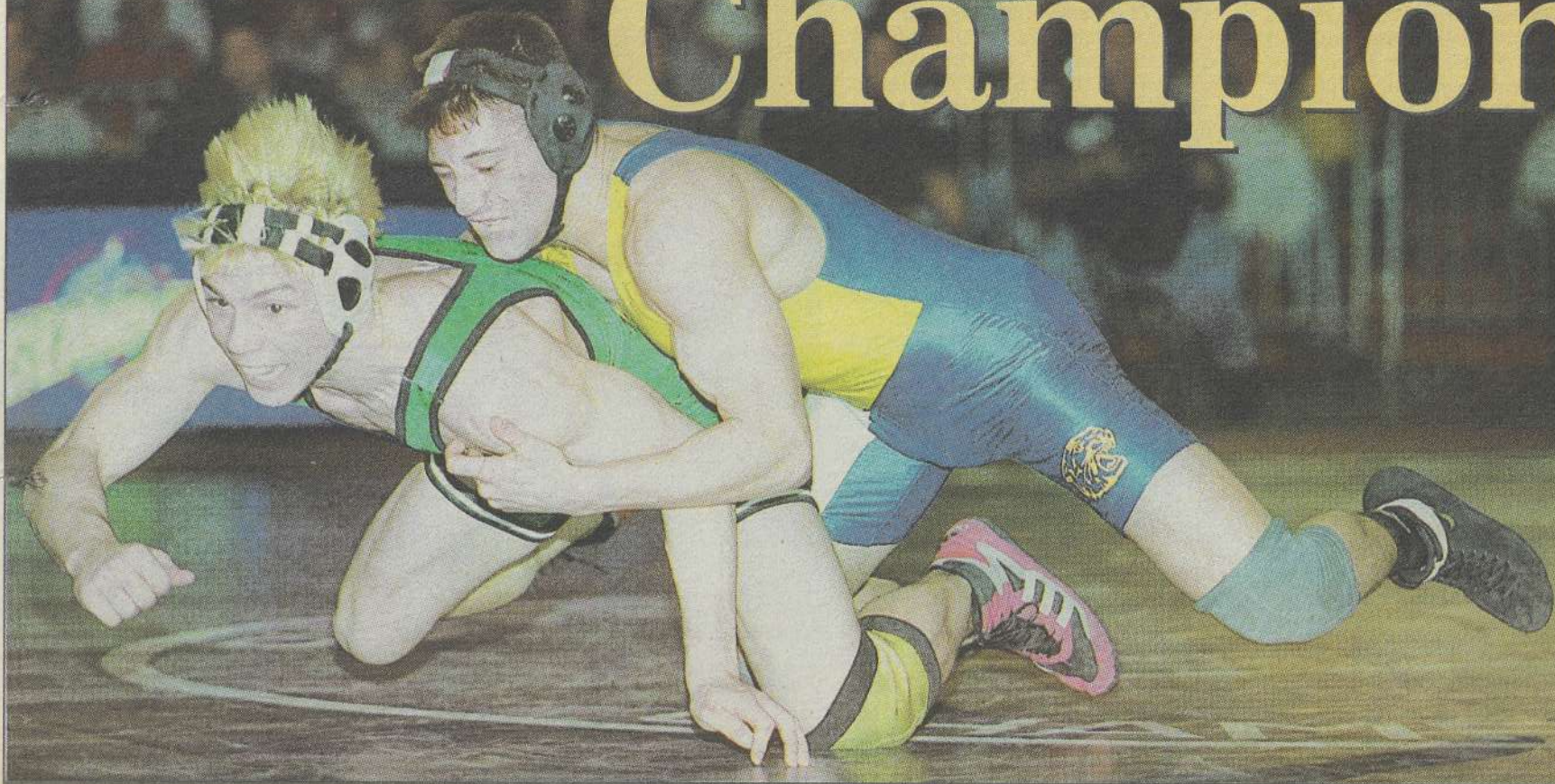


Supreme Champion



Photos by Joseph D. Sullivan

Shoreham-Wading River's Jesse Jantzen, top, tries to control Brentwood's Casey Beach during their 145-pound title match Sunday night in the Suffolk County Championships.

The Jantzen File

NAME: Jesse Jantzen
WEIGHT CLASS: 145
SCHOOL: Shoreham-Wading River

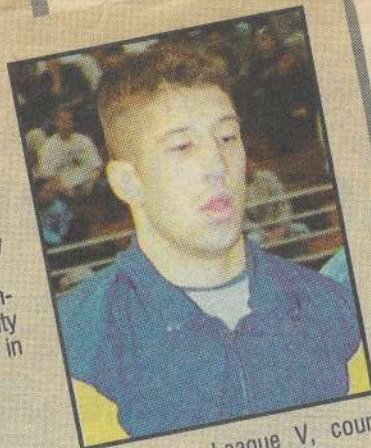
1995
 Record: 28-2 (96 pounds).
 Postseason: League V, county
 champion; third in state meet.
 Highlight: First Long Island seventh-
 grader to win or place in county
 tournament and first to place in
 state meet.

1996
 Record: 32-1 (112 pounds)
 Postseason: League V, county
 champion; third in state meet.
 Highlight: First Long Island eighth-
 grader to place in state meet.

1997
 Record: 37-0 (125 pounds)
 Postseason: League V, county,
 state champion.
 Highlight: First Long Island fresh-
 man to win state title.

1998
 Record: 41-0 (135 pounds)
 Postseason: League V, county,
 state champion.
 Highlight: First wrestler to win state
 titles as freshman and sophomore.
 Fourth four-time Suffolk champion.

1999
 Record: 36-0 (145 pounds)



Postseason: League V, county,
 state champion.
 Highlight: First five-time champion
 in league and county. Surpassed
 two-time state champion Adam
 Mariano of Comsewogue as Long
 Island's winningest wrestler.
 Mariano won 168 matches.

2000
 Record: 37-0 (145 pounds)
 Postseason: League V, county
 champion. Seeking unprecedented
 fourth state title.
 Highlight: Has state record 153-win
 streak. Long Island's only six-time
 league and County titlist.

Career record: 211-3.

COMPILED BY ANDY SLAWSON

Jantzen seeks to cap historic career with 4th state title

By Gregg Sarra
 STAFF WRITER

His disposition never changes.

It was the day after Jesse Jantzen had won his sixth straight Suffolk County wrestling championship and etched his name in the record books again. It was Monday morning, Presidents' Day, and the schools were closed for winter recess. While most of his friends were sunning in Florida or skiing in Vermont, Jantzen was preparing for the final stage of his fabulous high school career.

This was no time to take a vacation.

Jantzen is on the verge of New York state wrestling history. No one has won four state titles in 37 years. Only 11 wrestlers, including Jantzen, have captured three state crowns. So where was he on the morning after his sixth county triumph?

"He's out running," said his mom, Debbie, by telephone. "He'll be back soon. You know how Jesse is."

Jantzen is the ultimate competitor. Seldom does he not get in a solid workout. He is fanatical about getting in his run-

ning or sprinting, lifting weights or drilling on his wrestling moves. That's why he's been deemed by so many as the greatest wrestler in Long Island history. His record speaks volumes.

Jantzen has a 211-3 record, with six Suffolk League V, six county and three state titles. He goes for state title No. 4 March 3 and 4 at the Onondaga War Memorial in Syracuse.

"When I tell someone Jesse has won six county championships, they'll just look at me with this puzzled face," Shoreham-Wading River coach Paul Jendrewski said. "When it sinks in — six titles — they're stunned. You can't win more than six. He's won every year since the seventh grade without skipping a beat."

Still, Jendrewski will not make a prediction regarding this weekend's state meet. "It's not over till it's over," he said. "Didn't Yogi say that? We thought the pressure was off after winning the third state championship last year. But now he can stand alone in the annals of wrestling history."

He already does. Jantzen is riding a state record for consecutive wins, 153, which dates back to a semifinal loss at the state tournament on March 2, 1996. Two of his three losses are in the state semifinals and the other was in one of his first dual meets as a seventh-grader.

"It's a combination of everything he does in

WINNING TOUCHES

Notable winning high school streaks on Long Island:

BADMINTON: Miller Place has not lost in 422 matches (dating to 1976), and is the longest high school winning streak in any sport according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

BOYS TENNIS: Bay Shore won 173 straight matches (1966-1974) and nine consecutive Suffolk County titles.

BOYS TRACK: Centereach's winning streak of 158 meets spanned 27 seasons (1972-98).

WRESTLING: Mepham's streak of 130 victories (1946-1955) included dual meets and tournaments and followed another Pirates streak of 98-0-2.

BOYS LACROSSE: Sewanhaka still shares a national record with its 91-game win streak (1948-57).

SWIMMING: Plainview won a Long Island record 78 straight meets (1976-80).

SOFTBALL: Bay Shore's 55-game win streak (1994-96) included two state titles and two perfect seasons.

GIRLS BASKETBALL: Hempstead won 52 straight (1981-82), including the state title in 1982.

BOYS BASKETBALL: Oyster Bay won 38 straight (1951-53), including three straight Nassau crowns.

FOOTBALL: Bethpage's 32-game win streak ended in 1995 after three straight Nassau titles and two Long Island titles.

COMPILED BY ANDY SLAWSON

preparation for the season," said his father, Don Jantzen, who also is the assistant coach at Shoreham when he's not involved in the Suffolk County Police D.A.R.E. program. "A lot of kids work hard in this sport. But Jesse does all the extra things. And that's what separates him."

Jantzen's edge could be in the freestyle training that encompasses his nights during the spring and summer. "I do more wrestling in the offseason than I do in-season," Jantzen said. "I like baseball and soccer, but wrestling is what I've chosen to concentrate on."

During the fall, Jantzen is a staple at the North Shore Wrestling Club run by Longwood coach Darren Goldstein. He practices four nights a week with the area's top wrestlers.

"When Jesse was younger I tried to teach him that being successful in anything he chose to do would come with preparation and dedication," Don Jantzen said. "It's like putting marbles or straws into a jar. The weight training, running and the workouts are all like marbles. And it's the guy with the most marbles in the jar that's going to win."

Jantzen has won since taking the county title at 96 pounds as a seventh-grader. This year, he earned the 145-pound class title. For the first five years, Jantzen enjoyed a comfortable growth progression of two weight classes per season. As a senior he returned to defend the same class he won as a junior. Jantzen is a lean 145 pounds. His body is sculpted

muscle, but not massive. According to Don Jantzen, Jesse's offseason diet doesn't include too much sugar or fat. "My dad taught me the importance of workouts and eating right," Jantzen said. "He introduced me to the sport and drove me all over the country to improve."

Jantzen's statistics also provide the foundation for some contentious debates over the greatest individual athletes of all time from Long Island. And he still has one crowning achievement ahead of him.

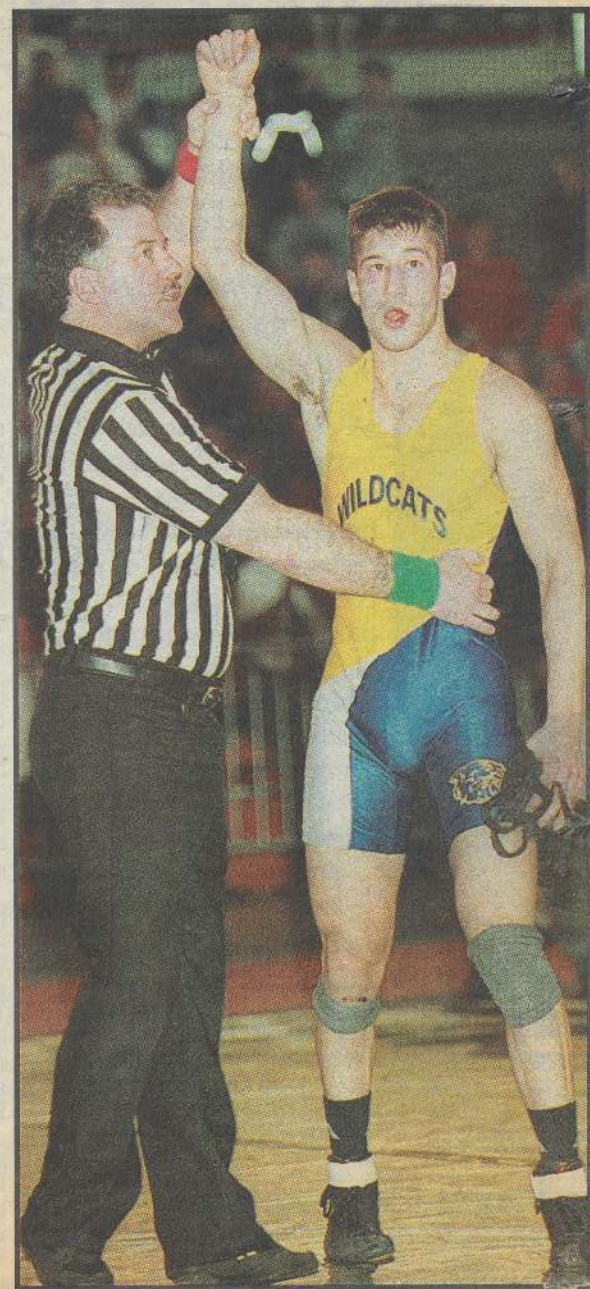
"There's plenty of talent in the state tournament," Jantzen said. "And anything can happen. I don't look ahead."

When the state tournament is over, Jantzen said he will concentrate on selecting a college. That may be his toughest decision yet. "Nothing is finalized yet," Jantzen said. "I'm leaning toward Harvard. But I'm still considering Hofstra."

Perhaps the most touching side of Jantzen is in his compassion for his fellow wrestlers. Sunday night, he turned in his Champion of Champions ballot and selected Rohan Murphy of East Islip, who finished fourth at 96 pounds. Murphy, who was born with a severe birth defect and had his legs amputated at age 4, is motivation for all wrestlers.

"He never loses sight of what's important," Don Jantzen said of his son. "When he told me he voted for Rohan... I was just so proud. He has it all together."

Like a true champion.



Hail to the victor! Referee Sean Brocking raises Jesse Jantzen's arm after he won sixth Suffolk County title.

Conner's Fame: Last Wrestler to Beat Jantzen

Tom Conner jumped up to get a better view of what was happening. Jesse Jantzen, Shoreham-Wading River's virtually unbeatable wrestler, disappeared at the side of the mat under the massive arms of Copiague's Leon Hewitt.

For an unbelievable instant, there was some doubt to Jantzen's invincibility. Jantzen made a mistake and that was news. He holds the state record with 153 consecutive wins. And his career record of 211-3 includes six county titles — a straight sweep from the seventh grade through the 12th.

For Conner there was something at stake in Jantzen's quest for an unprecedented sixth county crown last Saturday at the Suffolk County Championships at the University at Stony Brook. Conner, a 1996 Rocky Point graduate and the only wrestler to beat Jantzen on Long Island in six years, knows how one mistake can be costly.

Jantzen had amassed a 16-2 lead in his second-round match against Hewitt. But when Hewitt scored a two-point reversal, he grabbed Conner's attention and that of everyone else in the crowd of 3,225. And it

wasn't more than a few seconds before Jantzen rebounded to beat Hewitt by technical fall in 3:59.

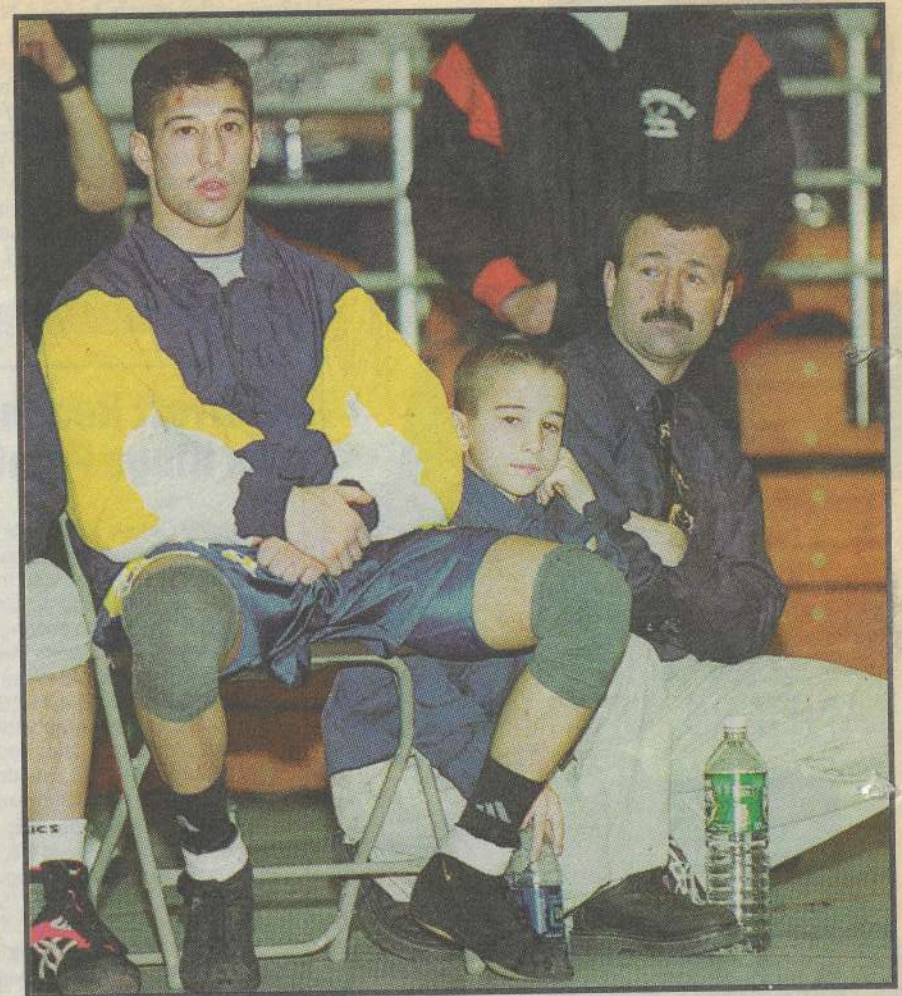
"It only takes one mistake in this sport and that's what makes what he's done so amazing," Conner said of Jantzen. "But for a split second, I thought, 'Oh no, there goes my claim to fame.'"

Conner said as he followed Jantzen's career, each victory became more meaningful to him because of what happened in their 96-pound match in January, 1995, Conner's junior year. Conner turned a 2-0 deficit into a reversal, and pinned Jantzen in 1:58.

Jantzen remembers the match. "I got caught on the crab ride, which is a risky move, especially when you're learning," he said. "Conner was a good wrestler. He was no slouch."

Conner, 21, is studying for his bachelor's degree in education at Dowling College. He is a teaching substitute at BOCES in Suffolk and is a volunteer wrestling coach at Rocky Point. While he lost to Jantzen twice in the 1996 season, he will be remembered for pinning Jantzen 154 matches ago. Said Conner, "No one can take it way from me."

—Gregg Sarra



Jesse Jantzen, left, watches the wrestling action with brother Corey and father Don